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## Six Tips for Healthy Holiday Feet

Sore feet should never be on the guest list to your holiday parties. Keep your feet healthy and enjoy a pain-free holiday season with these six tips.

### Festive Footwear

The holidays are a busy time and your feet need extra attention to carry you through this season's errands and events. Narrow shoes, high heels, and newer shoes that aren't worn in yet can irritate feet and cause blisters, calluses and even ankle injuries. Find a shoe that's supportive with a low heel that properly fits your foot's length, width and depth while standing.

### Pedicure Safety for your Mistletoes

Nail salons are the perfect place for relaxation and pampering, but they can also be a breeding ground for bacteria—including MRSA. Be vigilant when picking out a salon, look around and verify they follow proper sanitation practices as licensed by the state. You can also consider bringing your own pedicure instruments with you to your next appointment.

### Watch Out for Snow and Ice

Snow makes for a picturesque backdrop for the holidays, but it can create hazardous conditions. When traveling outside, always be mindful of snow and ice patches along your way. The ankle joints are vulnerable to serious injury from taking a spill on ice. If you happen to fall, take a break from activities until you can see one of our foot and ankle surgeons. Use RICE therapy—rest, ice, compression and elevation—to help reduce pain and control swelling around the injury. You can find a foot and ankle surgeon near you at [FootHealthFacts.org](http://FootHealthFacts.org).



### Avoid Overindulging in Holiday Treats

Your feet can be affected by enjoying too much of certain foods. Foods and beverages high in purines including shellfish, red meat, red wine and beer can trigger gout—an extremely painful condition when uric acid builds up and crystalizes around your joints. Uric acid is sensitive to temperature changes so the big toe is usually affected first as it's the coolest part of the body.

### Don't Let Jack Frost Nip at your Toes

Dropping temperatures can be detrimental to your foot health. It's important to wear insulated, water-resistant boots and moisture wicking socks to prevent frostbite, chilblains—an inflammation of the small blood vessels when hands or feet are exposed to cold air—or other cold-weather related injuries to the feet and toes.

### Watch your Feet

Keep an eye on your feet and regularly check them for any evidence of ingrown toenails, bruises, swelling, blisters, dry skin or calluses. If you notice any problems, pain or swelling, make an appointment with a foot and ankle surgeon. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](http://FootHealthFacts.org) to find one near you.

## Keep Boot Heels Low This Winter to Prevent Injuries

It's winter and for ladies that means it's officially boot season! When it comes to boot heels some believe the higher the better, but when adding ice and snow into the mix this fashion trend can be dangerous for feet and ankles.

Falls from heeled boots can lead to several injuries, but the type and severity depend on how you lose your balance. If your ankle rolls inward or outward, it can break. Twisting your ankle can stretch or tear ligaments causing an ankle sprain. Even just slipping from high heels can result in a broken toe, metatarsal or heel bone.

To ensure safety this winter, opt for a lower heel when conditions are icy, scuff up the soles of new boots or buy a pair with rubber soles that provide more traction.

No matter what style of boot you prefer, if you happen to take a spill this winter contact a foot and ankle surgeon for immediate evaluation and treatment and follow the RICE therapy—rest, ice, compression and elevation. To find a foot and ankle surgeon near you visit [FootHealthFacts.org](http://FootHealthFacts.org).

**Rest:** Stay off the injured foot as walking can cause further damage.

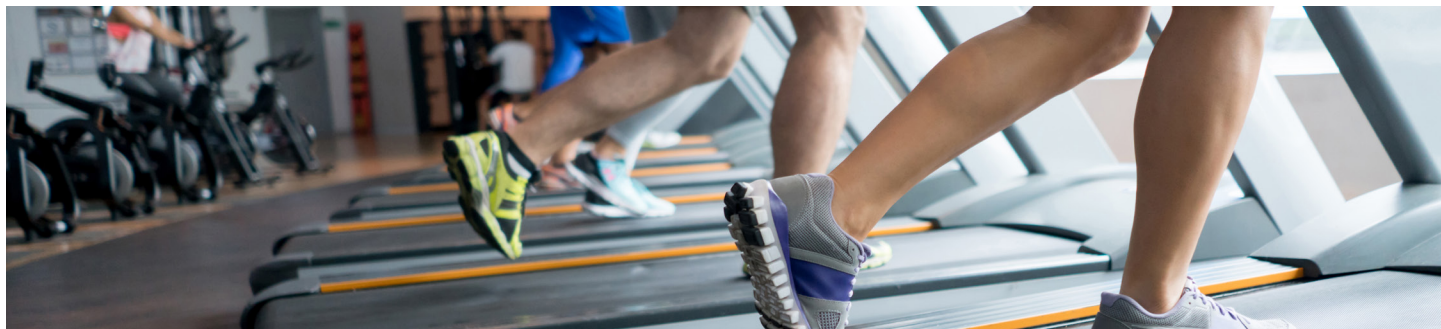
**Ice:** Reduce swelling and pain by applying a bag of ice over a thin towel to the injured area. Use the ice for 20 minutes and then wait at least 40 minutes before icing again. Never put the ice directly against the skin.

**Compression:** An elastic wrap can be used to control swelling.

**Elevation:** Reduce swelling by keeping the foot elevated slightly above heart level.



# Keep Your Feet Safe at the Gym in the New Year



The New Year is a time of renewed motivation and new beginnings, and a lot of resolutions start at the gym. Know what you can do to ring in the New Year and keep your feet safe.

## Choosing Shoes

Well-fitting athletic shoes are a must for any sport or exercise. If shoes don't properly support the foot's arch or provide proper heel cushion, they can cause heel pain or plantar fasciitis. Shoes that don't fit can cause a neuroma (nerve thickening/inflammation) or toenail injuries requiring injections, medication or physical therapy. Moisture-wicking socks can help prevent blisters, which can lead to more serious issues if becoming infected.

## Start Slow

Increasing stamina and the duration of your workout slowly can reduce the risk of overuse injuries including stress fractures or tendon sprain or strain. Stretching muscles before and after the workout will help to warm up and cool down muscles further preventing injury.

## Proper Technique

Improper exercise technique can lead to ligament or tendon injury in feet and ankles. Incorrect posture or misuse of exercise equipment can throw up stabilization of the foot and ankle and lead to joint sprains or muscle strains.

## Be Aware of Bacteria

Gyms are a place to work out seasonal stress and with that comes sweaty shoes, public showers, exercise equipment and pool decks—all of which create a perfect recipe for hidden bacteria. To avoid any additional germs, never go barefoot in public areas. Wear water shoes in areas with wet surfaces and cover any cuts, cracks or ingrown toenails as tears in the skin's surface can be an entry point for bacteria.

If your feet and ankles hurt during exercise or if you suffer a foot or ankle injury, contact a foot and ankle surgeon as soon as possible to schedule an appointment to be evaluated. Visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) to find one in your area.

# Hit the Slopes and Rinks Safely

Winter brings plenty of cold-weather activities for the whole family to enjoy. If you're planning on hitting the slopes or ice rinks this winter, there are a few things you can do to keep the sport fun and safe. Keep these tips in mind this year to enjoy winter sports without injury:

- Boots and skates should fit properly and be laced up tightly to provide proper ankle support.
- If it's been a while since you've last skied or skated, begin exercises two weeks before the outing to condition and strengthen your muscles. A foot and ankle surgeon can give you specific stretching and strengthening exercises to get you back in shape for the slopes.
- Enjoy winter sports with a friend, that way if there's an accident and injury strikes the other person can seek help immediately.

If you suffer an injury, contact a local foot and ankle surgeon for a consult immediately. If injuries are left untreated, they can worsen and lead to chronic ankle instability, arthritis, tissue damage or foot alignment problems.

Before participating in any winter sports this season, visit [FootHealthFacts.org](https://www.foothealthfacts.org) for safety and injury-prevention tips or to find a foot and ankle surgeon in your area.

